

*-Legislators Say Leak Shows Nuclear Plant's Aging Infrastructure and Lack of Plan to Address Public Safety* - Washington, DC – U.S. Representatives John Hall (NY-19), Maurice Hinchey (NY-22), Nita Lowey (NY-18) and Eliot Engel (NY-17) today called on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to investigate a recent water leak that contained radioactive material at the Indian Point nuclear power plant. In a letter to the NRC the legislators stated that the leak demonstrates not only serious deterioration in the physical plant of IPEC but it also calls into question whether IPEC has a program for dealing with its aging infrastructure that is capable of preventing, or even detecting, such deterioration.

On February 16th a pipe broke at the Indian Point nuclear reactor causing roughly 100,000 gallons of water containing radioactive material to escape, possibly flowing into the Hudson River. The discharge's source was the nuclear power plant's deteriorating secondary cooling system, which contains the radioactive isotope tritium. The nuclear plant was built in the 1970s and its 40 year license term is set to expire in 2012 and 2013.

Indian Point's aging infrastructure seriously concerns Representatives Hall, Hinchey, Lowey and Engel. The plant's physical decline calls into question the wisdom of granting Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc.'s request to extend Indian's Point's license for another 20 years beyond the plant's current 40 year license term. Entergy is the owner of the Indian Point facility.

Congressman John Hall said, "Indian Point's aging infrastructure and no evidence of a plan to deal with it is dangerous. Indian Point's physical decline calls into question the wisdom of granting another 20 year license term for the plant. Hudson Valley residents are entitled to know what dangers they face from Indian Point. We need a complete and thorough investigation of Indian Point's operations with full public disclosure. It is the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's duty to ensure that Indian Point's outdated systems do not threaten area residents."

"While I'd like to believe that the recent water leak at Indian Point was an isolated incident, it's become quite clear that the nuclear reactor's aging infrastructure presents major public health and security challenges that need to be addressed head-on," Hinchey said. "With possible radioactive material leaking from Indian Point, it's clear that the Band-Aid solutions of the past will no longer suffice. The NRC must conduct a comprehensive investigation of the plant to determine any short and long-term risks to public safety associated with the plant's infrastructure."

"Residents of the area surrounding Indian Point should not have to rely on good fortune to keep them safe from emergencies," said Lowey. "Indian Point must have a reliable and comprehensive system for preventing and detecting deterioration at the plant, which can lead to radioactive leaks. NRC should investigate this incident and provide information to the public, particularly as it evaluates Indian Point's pending license renewal application."

"This is another example of an outdated facility showing its age," said Engel. "However, this is not just about an outdated facility; it is a nuclear facility in one of the most densely-populated areas of the country. Indian Point would never be allowed to be built today, and it should not have its license renewed to continue operating."

The full text of the letter follows.

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March 12, 2009

Mr. Eric Leeds

Director

Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Washington, DC 20555-0001 Dear Mr. Leeds: It has come to our attention that on Monday, February 16, 2009, a sizeable water leak was inadvertently discovered at the Indian Point Energy Center (IPEC). The limited information currently available indicates that the leak involved a pipe of the condensate return system of the Unit 2 reactor. Press reports indicate that some radioactive material may have escaped as a result of this leak.

The leak, and its apparently serendipitous discovery, demonstrates not only serious deterioration in the physical plant of IPEC but it also calls into question whether IPEC has a program for dealing with its aging infrastructure that is capable of preventing, or even detecting, such deterioration. This is a real concern to us, and to many of our constituents, given that Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc., is currently seeking to extend IPEC's license for an additional 20 years beyond the plant's current 40 year license term.

Despite the seriousness of this event, Entergy released only minimal information about the leak, and failed to do even that in a timely manner. This is alarming given the obvious concerns associated with leaking plant systems. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission must ensure that the public is fully informed of these kinds of occurrences.

In our view, the possible leaking of radioactive material from an aging plant which is undergoing relicensing warrants a comprehensive investigation by the NRC. Therefore we respectfully request that the NRC conduct such an investigation and provide the public with detailed information relating to this and any other similar events at IPEC. Without such information, the public cannot be expected to be informed enough to adequately comment on the relicensing application during the public hearing process.

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